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FM AMCONSUL LAGOS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8317  
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 8154  
INFO RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0054  
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0026  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0033  
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 0065  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 001449

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DOE FOR GPERSON, CGAY  
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS  
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS  
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR SLISER  
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD  
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART  
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT  
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER  
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/27/2016

TAGS: [EPET](#) [ENERG](#) [SOCI](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: FUEL SHORTAGES, POVERTY ARE BACKDROP TO PIPELINE  
EXPLOSION

Classified By: Consul Alan Latimer for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Fuel leaking from a pipeline breached by vandals in the early hours of December 26 exploded, killing 269 people and injuring an additional 160 persons in the blast and ensuing fire, according to the Nigerian Red Cross. Early press reports put the number of deaths at 700, and some reports placed the number closer to 1,000.

¶2. (C) According to Dr. Levi Adjuonuma, General Manager for Public Affairs, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), residents of the crowded Abule Egba district were scooping the escaping oil into plastic canisters when the fuel ignited. As reported in the media, Lagos had been experiencing a fuel shortage during the three week run-up to the Christmas/New Years/Eid el Adha holiday season, a period during which Nigerians travel to their home villages to spend the holidays with their families. Queues at gas stations reached for blocks and public transportation was in short supply. The market price of fuel, which is usually Naira 65 per liter, soared to Naira 200 per liter.

¶3. (C) According to Adjuonuma, another pipeline had been vandalized earlier in the month; that incident went unreported by the media but exacerbated an already existing fuel shortage. An oil industry contact blamed bad planning by oil importers who had inadequate supplies scheduled for delivery at Lagos port. Another industry contact placed the blame for the shortage on NNPC officials who reportedly delayed authorization to off-load fuel for a week until guaranteed a slice of the profits. The contact also indicated that the NNPC is behind in paying importers for fuel.

¶4. (C) Comment: NNPC warned the public of the dangers of

trafficking in illegally bunkered fuel only days before the incident. However, the Nigerian lower class is struggling to make ends meet. With many families unable to afford school fees for their children or even breakfast for every child every day, income from illegally bunkered fuel is too tempting for them to ignore.

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